

OHV Users Meeting Notes

Grand Island, Nebraska

These notes are from a meeting of OHV users held in Grand Island to provide input into preparation of the updated Nebraska Trails Plan. Comments are listed, but are unattributed and represent only the opinions of those making the comments.

- Groups included in OHV: Jeeps, ATV's, Motorcycles
- 50 inches and under – suitable trail width for ATV's and snowmobiles
- People frequently use Iowa OHV Park in Council Bluffs.
- 4 public places for OHV use in Nebraska:
 1. Headworks OHV Park in Genoa, cooperatively with Loup Power District. 1400-acre facility.
 2. Nebraska National Forest (Halsey) – Dismal River Trail, used for hiking, bicycling, snowmobiles, equestrians also. Complaints about too much traffic, leading to a management plan and possible opening of more trails. DRT is a 9 mile linear trail – needs a loop. At one time, the Forest Service had 300 miles of 2-track trail.
 3. Harlan County Reservoir. 2-2.5 mile trail on south side of lake, with potential for expansion.
 4. 30-40 acre OHV park south of Sutherland at Sutherland Lake. Cooperative venture between NPPD and NOHVA. Small Park with loops, more adaptable to motocross.
- Most trails are geared to ATV's and dirt bikes. No facilities for larger vehicles, such as sand rails and jeeps.
- Even motocross facilities are closing down because of concern over noise. Major obstacle to use of private land is liability concern.
- Other venues – McKelvie National Forest, Pine Ridge. Jeeps and dune buggies can use Nebraska National Forest sites with catalytic converters or spark arresters.
- Geographic service gap most pronounced in east. Headworks is closed about one-third of the season because of conflicts with hunters over noise.
- In a perfect world, there would be a dedicated facility, with a one-mile buffer for noise abatement. Would also include camping facilities.

- Cowboy Trail would be a good place for snowmobiles, but not as attractive to OHV use. Rock quarries and other sites with challenges and hilly topography are desirable.
- River Valley OHV Park is owned by city of Council Bluffs and leased by the park operator. Sticker purchase goes into a fund for park maintenance. Facility is 350 acres, and accommodates motorcycles and ATV's.
- Cowboy Trail receives little use west of O'Neill. Waste to have it sitting unused.
- CT acquisition funding limits motorized uses. However, in Wisconsin and Minnesota, snowmobiles are used for transportation functions and TE funds are used for trail development.
- Along Cowboy Trail – equestrian use permitted on side of trail, but horses degrade the main trail.
- Example of Little Sahara State Park OHV facility near Winoka. Facility developed using RTP funds. Charges \$7/day for camping. A facility like this in the Sandhills would be excellent.
- Central NE counties like Hall and Howard also lack OHV access. Consideration of using Cornhusker Depot near Grand Island for an OHV park – but no topography and relatively uninteresting. Use of railroad beds from Loup City to Boelus, Dannebrog, St. Paul considered for multi-use trail.
- Other possibilities: Plattsmouth area where 1,800 acres were added to Shilling Wildlife refuge. Some opinion that OHV use should be permitted wherever state owns property.
- Major financial benefits with OHV use. If a site were made available, user groups would be able to finance development. Acreages are better than linear corridors.
- Design standards: Jeeps and sand rails require wider tracks. California establishes different design standards for larger vehicles. But jeeps and ATV's are compatible uses and can share adequately sized trails.
- Would be best if the State purchased an area of 2 to 4 sections. The site could also be used for hunting, with seasonal closures to OHV use.
- The demand is here. Selling 1,100 new off-road vehicles and 7 to 8,000 ATV's annually in Nebraska. One-third of ATV sales are purely for recreational uses. But Nebraska sales per 1,000 people are among the worst because of lack of places to ride.
- Nebraska Trail Riders Association – a small group of 90 families that purchased a site in Missouri. Bought there because of lower property taxes.

- Colorado – established a no sue provision.
- Users in NE pay high taxes, and have no place to go. Need a dozen or two places.
- Snowmobilers have common interests with ATV users.
- No designated snowmobile trails in state. Interest in Cowboy Trail. NGPC is looking at potential for joint snowmobile/equestrian trails.
- Snowmobile possibilities: Ponca area hike/bike trail, trail along Highway 12.
- Indian tribes own substantial amount of hilly, difficult to farmland. Could provide profitable opportunities for OHV park development.
- State needs to address insurance issues for motorized recreation. Need to get changes in law on private liability. This would allow private development for places to ride.
- A reasonable facility would take about 300 acres – about \$300,000 to buy land.
- Nebraska has received about \$2 to 2.5 million in refunded gasoline taxes. The state has not used substantial motorized funds in the past; maybe more could be spent on a specific project to compensate.
- ATV Park in Council Bluffs have noise restrictions, which people are willing to obey.
- Snowmobiles are not permitted on state right of way. NDOR prohibits use because of liability. Permitted on county roads unless the county prohibits snowmobiles.
- RTP funds: 30% motorized, 30% non-motorized, 40% multi-use. Committee will not turn down a good motorized use, but hasn't really received a good grant application. In Iowa, the applicant for RTP funding was a private group with a public sponsor.
- Tribal lands are a possibility – again an issue of liability.
- A Blue Ribbon Coalition develops ideas of ethics for user groups.
- Once land is purchased – development is relatively inexpensive for basic trails.
- User groups need help on state side to determine what land might be available. A push is needed to help user group execute.